

NRE 566 - PUBLIC OPINION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Fall 2010

Professor: Paul Mohai, 3520 Dana Building (763-4598; pmohai@umich.edu)

Lectures: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 4:00-5:30 pm **Credits:** 3 hours

Objectives

This course examines trends in public opinion on the environment, influences on people's concerns about the environment, the depth and strength of concerns, and how environmental concerns affect personal behaviors and the political process. Also covered are the role of the media in shaping environmental public opinion, the linkages between environmental values and core social values; race, class, gender, and intergenerational differences in environmental opinion and what implications such differences have for society. In addition, we will be making cross-national comparisons and explore the reasons why environmental concern appears to have become a worldwide phenomenon. Based on the understandings developed in the course, we will attempt to predict where public opinion on the environment is likely to head in the future and assess its potential for affecting future political and social change.

SPECIAL FOCUS FOR THIS SEMESTER: PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN THIS NOVEMBER'S ELECTIONS.

Grading and Evaluation

Grades will be based on class participation, a newspaper tracking exercise, eight 2-page commentaries on the weekly readings, and a 12- to 15-page term paper.

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| Class Participation | 15% |
| Commentaries | 30% |
| Term Paper Prospectus (due Oct. 26) | 10% |
| Newspaper Tracking Exercise (due Nov. 2) | 20% |
| Term Paper (due Dec. 9) | 25% |

Class participation: The class participation grade will be based on attendance in class, contribution to class discussions, and oral presentation of reports.

Tracking environmental issues in the news: As a class exercise, students will divide into teams of 4-6 and track environmental issues covered in the media over a 4-6 week period. Each team will pick a newspaper to monitor (e.g., New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, etc.). So as not to make this exercise burdensome, each member of the team needs to take a turn only once in monitoring the team's paper over a one-week period. Information about what to look for and how your team should analyze the findings will be given in class.

Commentaries: Students will turn in eight commentaries over the term on the weekly readings that a) summarize and critique the readings' principal ideas, arguments, findings, etc. and b) discuss new ideas and insights obtained from them. Each commentary should be focused on the collection of readings in a given week and should be about 1 ½ to 2 pages, single-spaced. More information about the commentaries will be given in class. No commentaries are assigned for readings in Weeks 1, 2, and 14. Students may choose any of the 8 of the remaining 11 weeks for which to submit commentaries. More information about the commentaries will be given in class.

Term Paper: The purpose of the paper is to bring course materials to bear in analyzing and understanding a subject of particular interest to you - within the general topic of public opinion and the environment. Your goal will be to demonstrate an in-depth understanding of course materials as well

as your ability to apply that material in order to analyze and uncover new insights about a phenomenon or issue of particular interest. A prospectus outlining the topic you plan to address will be collected and reviewed by me (due Oct. 26). More information about the term paper project will be given in class.

Reading Materials

1. Guber, Deborah Lynn. 2003. *The Grassroots of a Green Revolution: Polling America on the Environment*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
2. Other required readings will be available on NRE 566 CTOOLS site.
3. Link to useful web site: <http://www.pollingreport.com/>

Weekly Reading Assignments

Week 1 – Sept. 7 & 9: Introduction to Course

Guber, Introduction; pp. 1-15.

Time Magazine, “Special Report on Global Warming: Be Worried, Be Very Worried” (April 3, 2006)

Week 2 – Sept. 14 & 16: Assessing American Concern for the Environment / Instructions on Commentaries and Newspaper Tracking

Guber, Chapt. 1 – Do Americans Favor Environmental Protection? Pp. 19-36

Guber, Chapt. 2 – Strength: How Deep Is Public Commitment to the Environment? Pp. 37-55.

Guber, Chapt. 3 – Stability: Have Environmental Attitudes Changed over Time? Pp. 57-70.

Nisbet, M.C., & T. Myers. 2007. “The Polls – Trends: Twenty Years of Public Opinion about Global Warming.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 71(3): 444-470.

Week 3 – Sept. 21 & 23: Explaining Trends in Environmental Public Opinion/The Role of the Media

Iyengar, S., & D. R. Kinder. 1987. *News That Matters*. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press. Pp. 1-3.

Molotch - "Media and Movements," pp. 1-2

Archibald, E. 1999. “Problems with Environmental Reporting: Perspectives of Daily Newspaper Reporters.” *Journal of Environmental Education* 30.

Ader, C. R. 1995. “A Longitudinal Study of Agenda Setting on the Issue of Environmental Pollution.” *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 72: 300-311.

Boykoff, M.T., & J.M. Boykoff. 2007. “Climate Change and Journalistic Norms: A Case Study of U.S. Mass-Media Coverage.” *Geoforum* 38: 1190-1204.

Week 4 – Sept. 28 & 30: Influences on Long-Range Trends in Public Opinion: More on the Media, Think-Tanks, and Controversy

McCright, A.M., & R.E. Dunlap. 2003. “Defeating Kyoto: The Conservative Movement’s Impact on U.S. Climate Change Policy.” *Social Problems* 50(3): 348-373.

Boykoff, M.T. 2007. “Flogging a Dead Norm? Newspaper Coverage of Anthropogenic Climate Change in the U.S. and United Kingdom from 2003 to 2006.” *Area* 39(4): 470-481.

Wikipedia. 2010. “Climate Research Unit Email Controversy”

Also: Wash. Indep. – Economic Crisis Sidelines Global Warming Concerns – March 17 2009

CNN-Climategate Explained – Dec 7, 2009

CNN-Climategate Review Clears Scientists of Dishonesty – Jul 7 2010

OPTIONAL: Wikipedia, 2010, “Financial Crisis of 2007-2010”

Wikipedia, 2010, “Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill”

Week 5 – Oct 5 & 7: Demographic Correlates of Environmental Concern/Race, Gender, and Environmentalism

Guber, Chapt. 4 - Distribution: Is Environmentalism Elitist? Pp. 71-87.

Mohai, P. 2003. "Dispelling Old Myths: African American Concern for the Environment." *Environment* 45 (5): 11-26.

Mohai, P. and B. Bryant. 1998. "Is There a 'Race' Effect on Concern for Environmental Quality?" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 62(4): 475-505.

Davidson, D. J. &, and W. R. Freudenburg. 1996. "Gender and Environmental Risk Concerns: A Review and Analysis of Available Research." *Environment and Behavior* 28: 302-229.

Week 6 –Oct. 12 & 14: Environmental Actions and Behaviors

Guber, Chapt. 6 – The Ballot Box I: Issue Voting and the Environment in Presidential Elections; pp. 105-123.

Guber, Chapt. 7 – The Ballot Box II: Environmental Voting on Statewide Ballot Propositions; pp. 125-152.

Guber, Chapt. 8 – The Marketplace: Motivating the Citizen Consumer; pp. 153-174.

Week 7 – Fall Study Break & Oct. 21: The Use of Public Opinion Polling by Political Actors

Jacobs, L. R., & R. Y. Shapiro. 1995. "The Rise of Presidential Polling: The Nixon White House in Historical Perspective." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 59: 163-195.

Jacobs, L. R., E. D. Lawrence, R. Y. Shapiro. 1998. "Congressional Leadership of Public Opinion." *Political Science Quarterly* 113(1): 21-41.

Week 8 – Oct. 26 & 28: Environmental Values vs. Attitudes and Beliefs / Term Paper Prospectus

Dunlap, R. E., and K. D. Van Liere. 1984. "Commitment to the Dominant Social Paradigm and Concern for Environmental Quality." *Social Science Quarterly* 65: 1013-1028.

Stern, Paul. C., Thomas Dietz, and Linda Kalof. 1993. "Value Orientations, Gender, and Environmental Concern." *Environment and Behavior* 25: 322-348.

Kempton, W., J. S. Boster, and J. A. Hartley. 1996. Chapter 5, "Environmental Values." Pp. 87-115 in *Environmental Values in American Culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Week 9 – Nov. 2 & 4: Grassroots Environmentalism/Environmental Justice; Newspaper Tracking Reports

Mitchell et al. 1992. "Twenty Years of Environmental Mobilization: Trends among National Environmental Organizations." Pp. 11-26 in R. E. Dunlap and A. Mertig, eds., *American Environmentalism: The U.S. Environmental Movement, 1970-1990*. Washington, D.C.: Taylor & Francis.

Freudenberg, N., and C. Steinsapir. 1992. "Not in Our Backyards: The Grassroots Environmental Movement." Pp. 27-35 in R. E. Dunlap and A. Mertig, eds., *American Environmentalism: The U.S. Environmental Movement, 1970-1990*. Washington, D.C.: Taylor & Francis.

Taylor, D. E. 1998. "Mobilizing for Environmental Justice in Communities of Color: An Emerging Profile of People of Color Environmental Groups." Pp. 33-67 in J. Aley et al. (eds.) *Ecosystem Management*. Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis.

Week 10 – Nov. 9 & 11: The "Mainstream" vs. the "Grassroots"/Dimensionality of Environmental Concern

Dalton, R.J., and R. Rohrschneider. 2003. "The Environmental Movement and the Modes of Political Action." *Comparative Political Studies* 36(7): 743-771.

Guber, Chapt. 5 – Constraint: Are Environmental Attitudes Inconsistent? Pp. 89-102.

Guber, Conclusions- Rethinking Environmentalism; pp. 175-187.

Week 11 – Nov. 16 & 18: Environmentalism in Non-Industrialized ("Developing") Nations

Guha, R., & J. Martinez-Allier. 1997. "The Environmentalism of the Poor." *Varieties of Environmentalism: Essays North and South*, pp. 3-21.

- Guha, R., & J. Martinez-Alier. 1997. "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique." *Varieties of Environmentalism: Essays North and South*, pp. 92-108.
- Gardner, S. 1995. "Major Themes in the Study of Grassroots Environmentalism in Developing Countries." *Journal of Third World Studies* 12: 200-244.

Week 12 – Nov. 23 & Thanksgiving: Global Environmentalism

- Brechin, S., & W. Kempton. 1994. "Global Environmentalism: A Challenge to the Postmaterialism Thesis?" *Social Science Quarterly* 75: 245-269.
- Brechin, S. 1999. "Objective Problems, Subjective Values, and Global Environmentalism: Evaluating the Postmaterialist Argument and Challenging a New Explanation." *Social Science Quarterly* 80: 793-809.
- Mohai, P., S. Simoes, and S. Brechin. 2007. "Environmental Concerns, Values, and Meanings in the Beijing and Detroit Metropolitan Areas." Paper presented at the 2007 Beijing International Conference on Environmental Sociology held in Beijing, China, June 30-July 2, 2007.

Week 13 – Nov. 30 & Dec. 2: Environmental Socialization

- Chawla, L. 1998. "Significant Life Experiences Revisited: A Review of Research on Sources of Environmental Sensitivity." *Journal of Environmental Education* 29: 11-29.
- Chawla, L. 1999. "Life Paths into Effective Environmental Action." *Journal of Environmental Education* 31: 15-26.
- Bixler, R. D., M. F. Floyd, and W. E. Hammitt. 2002. "Environmental Socialization: Quantitative Tests of the Childhood Play Hypothesis." *Environment and Behavior* 34: 795-818.

Week 14 – Dec. 7 & 9: Conclusion of Course